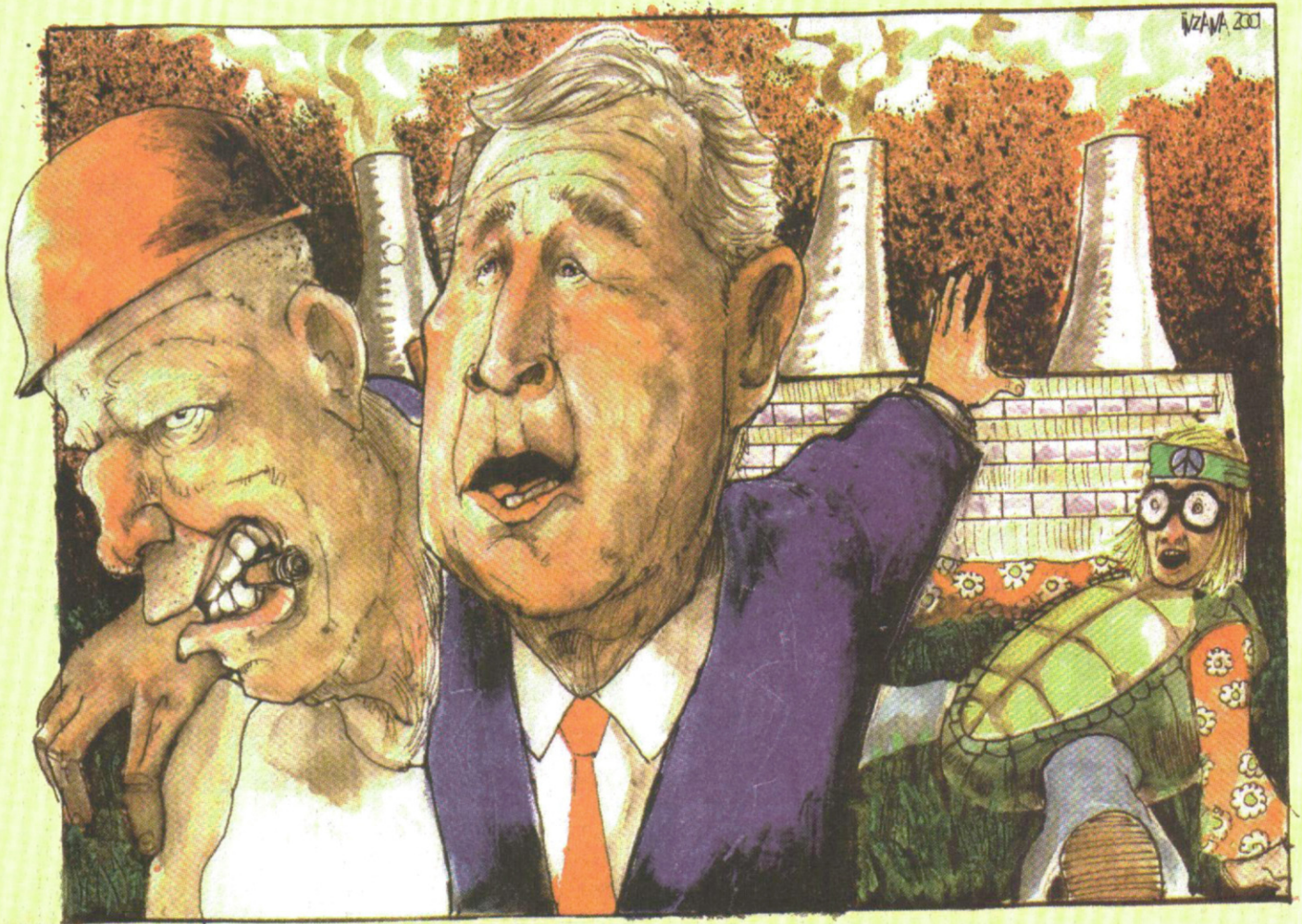


NIGERIA'S KILLING FIELDS • AMY GOODMAN SPEAKS OUT

In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

June 25, 2001



Teamsters not Turtles

Bush's strategy to divide the Democrats

John Nichols reports



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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

"... with liberty and justice for all"

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Publisher's Notes

In the last election only 20 percent of voters identified themselves as liberals (proving the adage that "a progressive is a liberal who has seen the polling numbers"). Forty percent of voters said they were conservative—with the balance being moderates or independents.

If we are going to mount an initiative to reduce the military budget and set aside a substantial peace dividend to repair the social safety net and give a real tax break to working families, we'll have to win over voters who don't identify themselves as "progressive." To attract new adherents to the progressive cause and build a winning coalition, we need to recognize that symbols count as much as well-tuned arguments.

Since the Reagan era, conservatives have been winning the war of symbols. In the last election, George W. Bush employed memorable phrases—"They trust government, I trust the people"—and he used them consistently. Al Gore had some good lines—"I will fight for you"—but he didn't use them effectively. And Gore's catchphrases weren't anchored in a larger symbolic context, unlike the Bush agenda, which was firmly tied to the traditional values of the social conservatives and the free market values of the economic conservatives.

The progressive movement needs a "retooling" that includes adopting a powerful set of alternative symbols. The symbolic cornerstone should be a progressive view of the family that is not anchored in traditional or marketplace values. This is a view of the family that is inclusive; that champions diversity and reconciliation; that allows everyone a seat at the table regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and so forth. This is a view that defends a child's right to a safe, nurturing home and sees their upbringing as the responsibility of the entire community.

The protection of working families should be our paramount concern. Today these families are under siege while our leaders in Washington focus on building up the military. Their economic well-being is threatened by a winner-take-all economy that favors the rich and powerful. Their psychological well-being is threatened by the destruction of the social safety net. Many families fear that a

catastrophic illness or loss of employment could force them out onto the street. The systematic destruction of the environment has made people are suspicious of the food they eat, the water they drink and the air they breathe. The prevalence of violence in American culture has led to a situation where parents cannot be assured that their children will be safe at school or on the streets.

No matter how strong our military or police may be, none of us are safe if our citizens believe that democracy is not working, that they do not have a voice and a stake in the future of the country. As Martin Luther King Jr. said (paraphrasing Herbert Spencer): "No one can be free until all are free." Freedom for working families requires that their security be assured—that they feel economically, psychologically, environmentally and physically safe.

Progressives must extend the symbol of the security of working families to specific programs. For example, economic safety means a tax cut specifically targeted to working families. Psychological safety means publicly funded health insurance. Environmental safety means tough new standards for clean air and water. And physical safety means gun control—or at least a determined effort to take guns out of the hands of children.

The progressive movement needs a "retooling" that includes adopting a powerful set of alternative symbols.

Developing a powerful alternative vision that revolves around the protection of working families requires more than a set of programs. It requires a new symbolic framework of images and ideas. Progressives need to roll up their sleeves to do the hard work of crafting this new vision. Over the past 25 years, the conservatives, particularly the Christian right, have accomplished this: coming up with phrases such as "traditional values," "the death tax" and "tax and spend liberals." Now it's our turn.

As always, I welcome your feedback (bburnett@inthesetimes.com).

Bob Burnett

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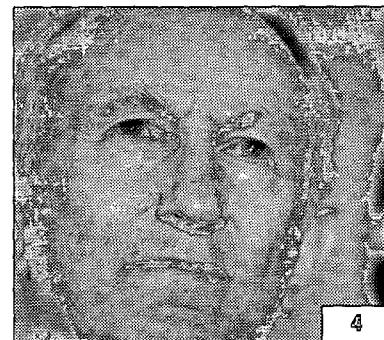
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Letters

Behind the Times

In answer to the question of whether The Hague Tribunal "is largely a tool of the United States," Bogdan Denitch says: "I think that's crap" ("Citizen of a Lost Country," May 14). He then immediately admits that the tribunal is a U.S. tool, but alleges that this is a good thing, "in this case." In fact, he says, "the United States has been too soft on the war crimes issue." It is obvious that Denitch does not think the United States itself has engaged in war crimes, in the Balkans or elsewhere, and he views this country as the proper authority to pursue them globally.

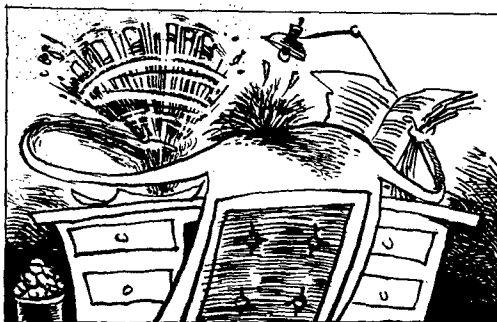
The cluster-bombing of the Serbian city of Nis (among others) and the gradual extension of the NATO bombing to Serbia's civilian infrastructure, which were straightforward violations of the Sixth Principle of Nuremberg that bars attacks "not justified by military necessity," don't bother Denitch. He mentions that 250,000 Serbs were driven out of Croatia and that 100,000 more left "on their own"—they no doubt confided to Denitch that their exit was strictly voluntary—but he fails to note that hundreds were slaughtered and that the United States not only supported this major program of killing and ethnic cleansing, it also protected the killers from prosecution.

Denitch says, "Massive killings and expulsions were taking place before the NATO intervention, and there was a record of more than 10 years of Serbian repression against the Albanians in Kosovo." But the documentation produced by the State Department, NATO, the United Kingdom and Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on events in Kosovo before NATO's bombing campaign lends no support to allegations of "massive killings and expulsions"—and in its internal reports, the German foreign office even rejected the use of the term "ethnic cleansing" to describe the conflict going on there before March 24, 1999, considering it instead an ugly civil conflict. But of course there were official and other propagandists' claims of an ongoing "genocide" before the bombing, and, as Denitch wrote in his book *Ethnic Nationalism*, "ideologies and faiths have never needed empirical verification."

He does criticize the NATO actions, but only for the advance announcement of the bombing and for insufficient NATO violence. Denitch would have gone in with ground troops, "quickly, without letting the Serbs build up." That this could have been done without the Serbs becoming

aware of the threatened action and taking counter measures is nonsensical. That this would have "done less damage" and made it "less possible for the Albanians to take revenge on the Serbs" is even more idiotic. (Why NATO occupying Kosovo can't prevent this "revenge," and why it has permitted the massive ethnic cleansing in Kosovo to extend to the Roma, Denitch doesn't explain.)

Furthermore, it is clear from his support for a surprise ground troop action that Denitch would have had this decision for a ground war made by our "leaders" without any public debate. So this "democratic socialist" not only approves NATO bypassing the United Nation and violating the



U.N. Charter, but he isn't bothered in the least by NATO's war crimes and is apparently unaware of or unconcerned over the fact that The Hague Tribunal has operated as a kangaroo court and violates every known principle of Western jurisprudence. Denitch also wants even more secrecy and unconstrained freedom of action on the part of the United States and perhaps other NATO powers.

His analysis of the breakup of Yugoslavia is also driven by emotion and ideology, not evidence. He writes that the breakup was a result of the "failure of the political class ruling in Yugoslavia," and ultimately Milosevic. He condemns the Western powers only for not dealing properly with the indigenous recalcitrants. Serious scholars on the subject—and even NATO war supporter Michael Ignatieff—recognize that the NATO powers played a key role in destabilizing Yugoslavia and did things that exacerbated tendencies to ethnic cleansing.

Indeed, Nikolaos Stavrou, professor of International Affairs at Howard University, writing in the *Washington Times* on April 16, stresses that among the major causes of Balkan troubles have been "the careless conversion of administrative boundaries into international borders and the prema-

ture recognition of Yugoslav Republics before they had addressed minority rights."

In short, the intellectual and moral quality of treatment of the Balkans in *In These Times* has fallen below the level available in the Reverend Moon's *Washington Times*.

Edward S. Herman
Penn Valley, Pennsylvania

Real Menace

I would like to add a point about George W. Bush onto Joel Bleifuss' editorial about U.S. policy toward China ("The New Red Menace," May 14). The only thing that makes this president very special is an amazing intellectual poverty that prevents him from worrying about how posterity views him. That in turn empowers him to push through things that no other president would even dare to voice in public.

Everybody else knows that capitalism, unable to thrive but in strife, needs war: real or imagined, actual or virtual. The fact is that the "Son of Star Wars" is needed by the U.S. economy. In one fell blast, it will kick-start the economy, which at the moment is courting (if not already in) recession. The short-term economic benefit of this otherwise insane program would probably far outweigh that from normal trading with China plus the rest of the world. In the long term, this madness is a tragedy to all of us, most certainly to our children and grandchildren.

Nonetheless, much can be done if the rest of the world unites to dissuade the Bush administration from this potentially apocalyptic route. We've seen it done recently at the United Nations when the rest of the world kicked the United States off the Human Rights Commission and, to the Bush administration's even frothier indignation, the International Narcotics Control Board. Even individually, we world citizens can do our bit: write to the media, support anti-nuclear and anti-war movements, make known your concern to your congressmen, members of parliament, etc.

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Cycle of Retribution

By Salim Muwakkil

Timothy McVeigh is scheduled to die on June 11. This will be his second date with death, but because of prosecutorial malfeasance it may not be his last. Whenever the state decides to kill him, it will be the wrong time.

According to *American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh and the Oklahoma City Bombing*, McVeigh ignited the bomb that killed 168 people and injured hundreds of others to avenge the deaths of approximately 80 Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas and two white separatists in Ruby Ridge, Idaho. The federal government plans to kill him to avenge those he killed.

Although this destructive cycle of retribution is obvious to any sober observer—indeed, more than 100 nations, including all of the Western democracies except the United States, have abolished the death penalty—many Americans fail to see the point. Since state-sanctioned killing fails to deliver, even on its own terms—it doesn't deter crime, advance equal justice or promote domestic tranquillity—the sole purpose of capital punishment is as an expression of public vengeance.

This primitive revenge ritual has become its own *raison d'être*, buttressed by scriptural support for the "eye-for-an-eye" scorecard. But this Babylonian calculus, which conceived of justice as a sort of itemized revenge, was computed in rural antiquity before the advent of judicial systems. It's a relic from another paradigm.

Still, national polls show that a large majority of Americans support the death penalty. As the McVeigh case demonstrates, death penalty cases have high error rates and make plain the costs of human fallibility on the most irrevocable form of punishment. The discovery of prosecutorial problems in this highly visible capital case underscores the conclusions of a June 2000 study by Columbia University Law School that found serious mistakes in 68 percent of all capital cases. In that comprehensive survey, researchers examined every capi-

tal conviction between 1973 and 1995, finding that the most common errors were incompetent defense counsel and police or prosecutorial misconduct. "American capital sentences are persistently and systematically fraught with serious error," noted Professor James Liebman, author of the study. "Capital trials produce so many mistakes that it takes three judicial inspections to catch them, leaving grave doubt whether we do catch them all."

In that sense, the McVeigh trial was typical. But in most other ways, McVeigh is an unusual resident of Death Row. He is an unrepentant, well-defended white man, who celebrates his crime as an act of heroism and the deaths of his innocent victims as "collateral damage." However, most of the 3,726 inmates on Death Row nationwide are poor, disproportionately black or Latino, and represented by underpaid, court-appointed attorneys who too often are either novices or burnouts. If McVeigh's case can be mishandled, just think of

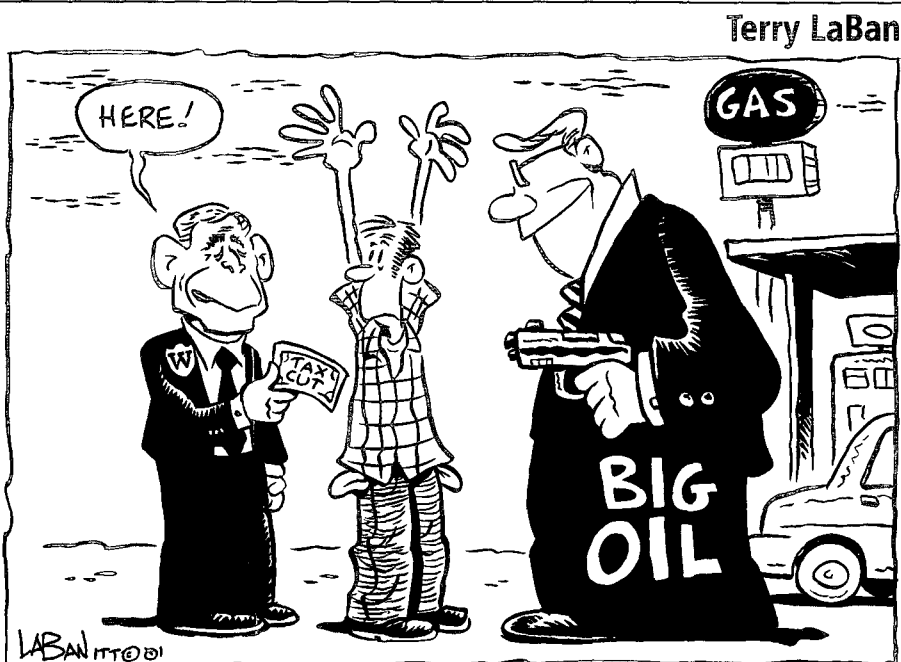
the prospects for foul-ups faced by the more typical capital defendants.

Apparently, Americans have been pondering those prospects. Sparked by the exonerations of wrongfully convicted Death Row inmates—86 have been freed since 1976, according to the Center on Wrongful Convictions at Northwestern University—a death penalty moratorium movement has begun a slow roll across the country. Since Illinois Gov. George Ryan imposed a moratorium on executions in his state in January 2000 (after 13 wrongfully convicted Death Row inmates had been freed in 13 years), moratorium measures have been considered in 19 states.

If it can happen to McVeigh, just think of the foul-ups faced by more typical capital defendants.

An April ABC News poll found that 51 percent of Americans supported a nationwide moratorium on executions. The possibility of the government executing an innocent person even outrages conservatives; it provides an angle of argument that accommodates the view that the government can do nothing right.

Perhaps the collateral damage of Timothy McVeigh's death will be the end of the death penalty itself. ■



Grand Old Jeffords

Vermont Independent shakes up the Senate

By Jason Vest

WASHINGTON—When the first Senate Republican Caucus meeting of the year convened in January, John McCain advised his colleagues that their party would be well-served by adopting a deferential and respectful demeanor in dealing with colleagues not of the lock-step conservative Republican persuasion. Going so far as to lobby for a system of bipartisan co-chairmanships in the evenly divided Senate, McCain held that this wasn't simply a matter of courtesy and collegiality, but of political necessity. "All it takes," he said, "is one of us to walk across the aisle, and it's all over."

The Arizona senator may now add "prophetic" to his list of descriptive modifiers, though even McCain may have been surprised by the sudden departure of Vermont's James Jeffords from the thinning herd of card-carrying Republican moderates. Whatever the case, the Grand Old Party wasn't looking so grand on May 24 when Jeffords announced he was going to join fellow Vermonter Bernie Sanders—who serves in the House—and embrace independent status.

"I was not elected to this office to be something I'm not," Jeffords announced, saying he disagreed with Bush's budget and expected to disagree with the president and the party's conservative leadership on a host of other issues. Noting that even Vermont's conservatives historically have championed some progressive measures, Jeffords lamented the end of ideological diversity within his own party, and invoked "my own conscience and principles I have stood for my whole life" as his reason for leaving the GOP. Reiterating the fear of all his former colleagues, he reminded his audience that "control of the Senate will be changed by my decision."

Will it ever. Where Utah's Orrin Hatch would have presided over the fast-track confirmation of Bush's conservative judicial appointees, now

sits Vermont's Patrick Leahy—not the type likely to rubber-stamp the White House's list. Ted Kennedy resumes his position as chairman of the Health, Education, Labor and Pensions committee—a powerful perch whose occupant is likely to make it much more difficult for Team Bush to implement its domestic agenda. Whether or not the Democrats choose to proactively use their power or push for "bipartisanship" still remains unclear, but they now have the lion's share of resources at their disposal, much to the dismay of the Republicans.



STEVEN E. FRISCHLING/AF

"I'm not elected to this office to be something I'm not," Jeffords announced.

"A lot of people are going to be out of jobs tomorrow," a veteran GOP operative lamented a day before Jeffords' announcement, bracing for what always happens when a party goes from the majority to the minority: substantial staff cuts. "If we've got 10 subcommittee staffers now, tomorrow, it'll flip—they'll have 10, we'll have three. A lot of people will be looking for work." (The suggestion that the Bush tax cut would help them was not met with mirth.)

In other corners of the Republican establishment, there was intense anger and scorn. "We twisted a lot of arms to get him money in the last election, and it wasn't easy, because a lot of donors did not want their money going to him," says one fundraiser, who hopes Jeffords will be "perpetually paid back" by the Republican Party for his "betrayal."

But dotted throughout Washington's archipelago of Republican legislators, pollsters, fundraisers, consultants and staffers were at least a few operatives who hope this arresting development will check the practical and ideological arrogance that has been the hallmark of the Bush administration. "Look, Andy Card [Bush's chief of staff] has been on the phone to Vermont media encouraging them to focus on how their senator isn't voting with the president," says one veteran of an earlier administration. "Up there, Jeffords is like Jimmy Stewart. This

is not the guy to do this to, or the state to do it in." (Mindful of Reagan's 11th Commandment—"Thou shalt not speak ill of thine fellow Republicans"—none wanted to be quoted by name.)

"At the very least this is a reminder that John McCain isn't the only Republican the leadership fucks over regularly," says another. "Lott and his cronies have beat up on Jeffords and the moderates a lot, and I can only hope Lott will resign for doing something this continuously and needlessly stupid."

One consultant with more than 30 years experience in GOP state and national campaigns mused over who was more responsible for "this colossal blunder"—Vice President Dick Cheney or Bush consigliere Karl Rove—and mulled over the possibility that "the public is increasingly starting to see Cheney as Darth Vader." ■

No Mercy for Vieques Protesters

The harsh jail terms meted out on May 23 by a federal judge in San Juan, Puerto Rico to the Rev. Al Sharpton and three New York politicians for acting as human shields against naval bombing exercises on Vieques were meant to send a clear signal: Defy the U.S. Navy and you get no mercy.

U.S. District Judge Jose Fuste sentenced Sharpton to 90 days: Bronx Democratic Party chief Roberto Ramirez, City Councilman Aldolfo Carrion and State Assemblyman Jose Rivera got 40 days each after convicting them in a quick trial of misdemeanor trespassing charges.

The four were among more than 180 protesters arrested in late April and early May for moving onto the Navy's Camp Garcia to block the latest round of bombing. But they were not the only high-profile activists nabbed. Still awaiting trial as I filed this column were Illinois Democratic Rep. Luis Gutierrez, actor Edward James Olmos, attorney Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and New York hospital union leader Dennis Rivera. Already, Ruben Berrios, the leader of the Puerto Rican Independence Party, has been slapped with four months, the longest sentence. Berrios, who was among the originators of last year's resistance camps on the bombing range, has now been arrested twice.

Despite nearly two years of uproar and national headlines over the Navy bombings, most Americans still have not grasped how widespread and deeply felt the Vieques issue is throughout Puerto Rican society. Among those arrested in early May were Sen. Norma Burgos, a former secretary of state and now vice president of the island's pro-statehood party; Danny Rivera, one of the island's legendary singers; and Jose Aponte, mayor of the town of Carolina and president of the Puerto Rican mayors association.

Just before the arrests, top Puerto Rican entertainers and sports figures such as singers Ricky Martin, Marc Anthony and Jose Feliciano, actor Benicio del Toro, Detroit Tigers outfielder Juan Gonzalez, middleweight boxing champion Felix Trinidad, and golfer Chi Chi Rodriguez all called for the Navy's withdrawal in full-page

advertisements in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*.

Even Gov. Sila Maria Calderon and a majority of the Puerto Rican legislature have called on the Navy to get out. They recently approved a new noise abatement law meant to make further



Navy bombardment illegal. Calderon is awaiting a hearing in U.S. District Court in Washington on her request for an injunction against the Navy.

Under the Clinton administration, more than 500 people arrested last year and charged with their first offense were given a slap on the wrist—either probation or time served. But Attorney General John Ashcroft and the Bush administration have resorted to a get-tough policy with the new wave of protesters. And those arrested for the first time are now getting a minimum of 40 days in jail.

Trials for Sharpton and his fellow New Yorkers proceeded with lightning speed. They were all arrested May 1, then ordered to stand trial in the same month. When they tried to get a delay so each could choose his own lawyer and prepare his defense, Fuste denied their request, ordering one attorney, Jorge Carmona of the Stop the Vieques Bombing Defense Fund, to represent all of them.

For all four, the sudden trial and stiff sentences came at the worst possible time. Municipal primary elections in New York are set for September. Ramirez is the campaign chairman for Fernando Ferrer, who is seeking to become the first Hispanic mayor in the city's history. Carrion is in a tight race to succeed Ferrer as Bronx borough president, and Sharpton was expected to play

an important role in mobilizing black voters behind one candidate, most likely Ferrer. Black and Latino leaders were furious. "It's obvious that these guys are trying to send their usual ham-fisted brutal message," Ferrer says of the Justice Department prosecutors.

Internationally, the Navy's stubborn refusal is having unusual repercussions. On May 3, two days after the recent round of arrests on Vieques, the United States was tossed off the U.N. Human Rights Commission in a secret vote of its 53 members. France played a key role in the embarrassing rejection. French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin is a key leader of the socialist international along with his good friend Ruben Berrios. More than two decades ago, Berrios brought Jospin to visit Vieques.

The crackdown has only energized opposition to the bombing. "Next time the Navy tries to bomb," says Wilda Rodriguez, spokeswoman for the Vieques Bombing Defense Fund. "We'll have three times as many people getting arrested."

"Next time the Navy tries to bomb, we'll have three times as many people."

The jailing of Sharpton by itself brought unprecedented attention to Vieques within the black community. Lawyer Johnnie Cochran got into the act, stepping forward to appeal Sharpton's case. Puerto Rican leaders, meanwhile, are lining up for the next round of arrests. They have vowed to turn the annual Puerto Rican Day Parade scheduled for June 10 into a huge public protest over Vieques.

Not since the sit-ins over Jim Crow and the anti-war movements of the '60s has a human rights issue stirred a whole segment of the U.S. population this way. An entire territory of the United States is in open rebellion against the Pentagon, yet the admirals and our lawmakers in Washington go blithely about their business, ignoring the whole matter. They've lost the obedience of an entire colony, and a base called Vieques. ■

Citizen Kane on Steroids

By Martin A. Lee

A change of government in Italy is easy to ignore given that it happens so often. But the May 13 ballot won by billionaire media magnate Silvio Berlusconi warrants special attention. His election as prime minister of Italy's 59th government since World War II should trigger alarms in any self-respecting democracy.

A flamboyant demagogue with extremist allies, Berlusconi ran as head of a far-right-tilting, populist coalition that embraced openly racist and neofascist parties. The Italian media-mogul-turned-politician compares himself to Napoleon, delights in ridiculing AIDS victims and is chummy with Rupert Murdoch. Convicted four times on charges of perjury, falsifying financial records, tax offenses and bribery, Berlusconi has a shady track record with several criminal indictments still pending. He was voted into high political office despite allegations of Mafia connections and questions about how he acquired his personal fortune.

A walking, talking conflict of interest, Berlusconi has his fingers in practically every big-business pie in Italy. He is one of the world's wealthiest men, presiding over a \$14 billion financial behemoth that includes Italy's biggest publishing house, its leading advertising agency, its wealthiest department-store chain, a major investment firm, extensive real estate holdings, the country's top soccer club and, most significantly, Italy's three main private television networks.

As prime minister, Berlusconi also will control Italy's three public TV stations, thereby commanding the attention of 90 percent of Italy's viewers. Nearly the entire broadcasting system in the world's sixth-largest industrialized economy will effectively rest in one man's hands. "It's a situation without precedent in the Western world," says Giovanni Sartori, professor emeritus of political science at Columbia University and a longtime observer of Italian politics.

Likened to "Citizen Kane on steroids," Berlusconi enjoys a concentration of power over information that exists in no other democratic country. Without his domination of the airwaves, he never would have emerged as a significant political figure in Italy. "Sua Emittenza" ("His Transmittance"), as Berlusconi is widely known, marshaled his opinion-molding



Silvio Berlusconi wins, democracy loses in Italy

TV and print venues to demonize his adversaries and further his own political ambitions. Blatantly biased "news" broadcasts on Berlusconi's networks were virtually indistinguishable from campaign ads and press releases hyping his candidacy.

During the campaign, Berlusconi was the most visible presence on Italian TV, while his opponents received perfunctory coverage at best. Because Italy's state television doesn't run political commercials, Berlusconi's three national networks exercised a virtual monopoly on election advertisements. His rivals were in

the unenviable position of having to shell out money to Berlusconi or forsake TV ads. "This is the only country in the world where the political parties must pay their political adversary in order to run an election campaign," says Giuseppe Giulietti, a parliamentary representative of the Left Democrats, the main party of what is now Italy's center-left opposition.

Outspending their rivals by more than 20-to-1 and taking advantage of disproportionate access to national media, Berlusconi's coalition was able to secure absolute majorities in both houses of parliament. His own party, Forza Italia, is the biggest vote-getter in the country.

Berlusconi's principal governing partner is Gianfranco Fini, a suave, 49-year-old politician who cut his teeth as leader of the Italian Social Movement (MSI), Europe's oldest neofascist party. Berlusconi publicly aligned himself with Fini before the MSI chief gave his organization a face-lift and renamed it the National Alliance in 1995. The National Alliance recently grabbed 11 percent of the vote, ensuring that Fini will be deputy prime minister in the new regime.

Fini claims that he is now a mainstream conservative, but the identity of his party remains inextricably bound up in its fascist heritage. Despite Fini's attempts to distance himself from the most extreme elements of the National Alliance, many of its members still harbor nostalgia for Mussolini's Blackshirts. Francesco Storace, Fini's close associate and National Alliance president of the Lazio region, wants to rewrite school textbooks, which he says give a Leninist slant on Italian history.

Forza Italia also made an electoral pact in Sicily with Fiamma Tricolore (Tricolor Flame), an unabashedly fascist sect.

ALESSANDRO BIANCHI/AFP



Teamsters not Turtles

Bush's strategy to divide the Democrats

By John Nichols

In this era of eternal electioneering, the purpose of a presidential administration's first term can be summed up succinctly: to secure a second term.

George W. Bush and Dick Cheney fully understand this principle. The current executive team is, after all, the first in 112 years to occupy the White House after losing the popular vote. In 2004, Bush and Cheney are determined to actually win the election. To that end, Bush's political team is paying inordinate attention to a set of numbers with which most Americans, even most progressives, are unfamiliar.

While organized labor has struggled to increase the percentage of American workers who carry a union card in recent years, it has been highly successful in increasing the percentage of American voters who identify with the labor movement. Indeed, this could well be organized labor's most dramatic success story of the past decade. In 1992, according to Voter News Service, only 19 percent of voters identified themselves as members of union households. In 1996, that figure rose to 23 percent. In 2000, it was 26 percent. Since overall voter turnout was roughly the same between 1996 and 2000, that means that an additional 2.5 million union workers and members of their families cast ballots last year.

A Peter Hart Research Associates poll found that the Democrats prevailed over Bush nationally by a 63 to 32 per-

cent margin among such voters. Critically, union votes closed the deal for Al Gore in vital battleground states such as Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Michigan—with a staggering 42 percent of the electorate wearing the union label in the latter. Were it not for the intervention of the Supreme Court, union votes certainly would have been credited with helping to deliver Florida—and the presidency—to Gore.

All other things being equal, if organized labor simply continues to up the percentage of "union-household" votes at the same rate as it did during the '90s—and if those votes continue to trend Democratic at roughly the same clip—Bush will be finished in 2004. "It's clear that [in the 2000 election] union members exercised the unmatched power we hold as a united political force in this nation," says AFL-CIO President John Sweeney. "We're building a solidarity and culture of mobilization that will last, and we're going to build it even more."

The Bush political operation—easily the most sophisticated ever constructed within the White House—may not be able to prevent the mobilization. But it is determined to undermine its solidity. Working with models from the re-election campaigns of Richard Nixon and Ronald Reagan, Bush political strategist Karl Rove is seeking to drive a wedge between blue-collar trade union members and environmentalists. The Bush political team is using a predictable lure: the promise of new jobs.

At a closed-door meeting on May 14 between Vice President Dick Cheney, Labor Secretary Elaine Chao and leaders of 23 unions—mostly from the AFL-CIO's Building and Construction Trades Department—Cheney offered plenty for labor to get excited about. The Bush energy plan, he claimed, would include schemes to build up to 1,900 new power plants and 18,000 miles of fuel pipelines over the next two decades. According to the calculations favored by the Bush team, each new power plant would create 1,000 construction jobs and 200 permanent jobs, while every 1,000 miles of pipeline is good for another 5,000 jobs. And that doesn't even count the boom Cheney promised if the administration's dream of resurrecting the nuclear power industry is realized.

White House aides saw the meeting as more than an energy policy briefing, however. For them, it was a high-stakes political overture with significant portents for the 2004 race. Hence, the presence of Rove, who performed introductions and reminded the union crowd that Cheney held an International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers union card when he worked summers as a utility company lineman in Wyoming. Cheney's official duty was to explain the administration's energy policy to leaders of the Teamsters, Steelworkers, Plumbers, Carpenters, Laborers, Steam Fitters and Seafarers unions. Unofficially, he was implementing a meticulous strategy aimed at dividing the Democratic base.

If Washington reporters tended to miss that aspect of the story, Phil Clapp, the savvy president of the National Environmental Trust, did not. "The administration is trying to split the Democrats by wooing labor," Clapp said after the meeting. "It's quite an obvious strategy."

And quite a successful one, if comments from some labor leaders who attended the meeting are any measure. "We like a lot of things," said Teamsters President James Hoffa. "We believe we need more nuclear plants. We believe we need more refining capacity; we haven't been building refineries." (Already, the Teamsters and Laborers have broken ranks to endorse Bush's proposal to open the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge for oil exploration.)

There was appropriate skepticism about the administration's proposals. Union leaders sought but did not receive a commitment that jobs created under the Bush plan would go to unionized workers, or that essential materials—such as steel—would be produced in U.S. plants. Hoffa expressed concern about the Bush administration's ties to oil corporations—and about the prospect that the president's energy plan might ultimately do more to enrich big oil than workers and consumers. When all was said and done, however, Hoffa released a statement saying the Bush plan could create 25,000 Teamsters jobs in Alaska, and thousands more in other parts of the country. "The creation of jobs for Teamsters members can make strange bedfellows," he said, "but it's a bed we will lie in to keep our members working."

Cheney and Rove were particularly pleased with the praise their plan received from Douglas McCarron, president of the

500,000-member United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners. The Carpenters recently quit the AFL-CIO, with union Secretary-Treasurer Andris Silins saying at the time, "The AFL-CIO has strayed to social and environmental issues that have nothing to do with getting better wages and working conditions for working people."

That may just sound like internal union bickering. But to the Bush team, that is the sweet sound of a crack opening in a traditional Democratic coalition. They know the sound well. They've heard it before.

In the early '70s, Nixon borrowed a page from George Wallace and used racially charged talk about crime and school busing to pull southern Democrats and urban white ethnics from the north into his "silent majority." Reagan used culture-war appeals on issues such as abortion and gay rights to turn white, working-class Catholics from Cleveland and Pittsburgh into "Reagan Democrats." First elected in tightly contested races, Nixon and

Reagan surged to second terms on the strength of millions of votes from traditionally Democratic union households. In 1984, when the AFL-CIO strongly supported Democrat Walter Mondale, exit polls showed that Reagan won 46 percent of the union household vote to Mondale's 53 percent.

A major outreach to the leadership of key blue-collar unions and, by extension, to their millions of members is critical to replicating the Nixon and Reagan strategies. Besides efforts to find common ground with building trades and maritime unions on issues of job creation, the White House is actively seeking the support of the Machinists union for its National

Nuclear Defense scheme—a.k.a. "Star Wars"—and the union has praised key aspects of the initiative.

The strategy of pitting the Bush administration's job promises against Democratic concerns for the environment and nuclear disarmament is a smart one for the president. "It's worked before," says Wisconsin Secretary of State Douglas LaFollette, a Democrat with a long history of environmental activism. "When I was in the state Senate back in the '70s, I had a 100 percent AFL-CIO voting record. But I had a lot of run-ins with my friends in the labor movement because they were continually told by the Republicans that there was no way to reconcile jobs and the environment. I had really hoped we had gotten beyond the old divide-and-conquer approach. But it's no surprise to me that Bush—who is so anti-environment—would stir it up again."

The Bush initiative is clearly a threat to the long-term prospects of the "Teamsters and Turtles" coalition of trade unionists and environmentalists forged in the 1999 Seattle protests against the World Trade Organization. The coalition played a big role in lobbying against permanent most-favored-nation trading status for China and is poised to be a prime player in the fight against Bush's efforts to win the "fast track" negotiating authority he would use to build a Free Trade Area of the Americas. (Indeed, few union leaders have lambasted Bush more loudly on the FTAA than Hoffa.)

Where is the Democrats' dramatic counter to Bush's pipe-dream of pipelines and old-fashioned power plants?

To a greater extent than ever before, the AFL-CIO leadership has built working relationships with organizations the labor movement once kept at arm's length—especially environmental groups such as the Sierra Club and Friends of the Earth. With early assaults on ergonomic rules, arsenic restrictions and dozens of other priorities of both the labor and environmental movements, the Bush administration has done more than enough to keep leaders of the two movements working together.

But Rove and his crew don't expect union leaders to start appearing on Republican podiums anytime soon. Their goals are far more modest: If they can foster dissent between labor and environmental groups on job-creation issues, and if they can create an impression that the Democrats are more concerned about the environment than jobs, they will have positioned their man well to repeat the Nixon-Reagan scenario in states that are essential to Democratic chances in 2004. If the Rove strategy succeeds in simply shaving a few percentage points off the current level of union household support for any Democrat who challenges Bush, he will have earned his keep.

And his political operation has already proven its ability to use the jobs issue as a hammer against Democrats: Consider the 2000 results from West Virginia where, despite united union support for Gore in a traditionally Democratic state, Bush prevailed with an environment-versus-jobs scare campaign. Forget about Florida—if Gore had simply won West Virginia, a state that voted for Mike Dukakis and Bill Clinton (twice), he would have been sworn in as president on January 20. Don't doubt Rove's determination to export the West Virginia strategy in 2004.

So what are Democrats doing to challenge a Republican White House that is using some of the oldest tricks in the political playbook? Not enough.

"The differences between our principles and President Bush's could not be greater," said House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt, as he unveiled a Democratic plan that argued in its introduction, "We believe that America's current and future energy needs can be met without compromising our nation's fundamental environmental values. We believe that the federal government can lead by example and become more energy efficient, invest in innovative technologies, and assure that energy markets are fair and competitive."

That's a sound, if not particularly sexy, line of analysis. But where is the traditional Democratic promise of significant job creation? Where is the dramatic counter to Bush's pipe-dream of pipelines and old-fashioned power plants? Where is the promise of the massive alternative energy jobs program? Where is the public works promise that historically has cemented the relationship between Democrats and labor?

The simple answer is that the "new realism" of the New Democrats says that public works programs of the traditional sort are no longer politically viable. What the New Democrats cannot explain, however, is why Democrats have had such a hard time winning congressional majorities since they began embracing the DLC's tepid, Republican-lite agendas for solving major problems.

The Democratic alternative to the Bush administration's energy proposals must be every bit as aggressive and adventurous as the president's plan. The difference should not be in scope or scale—simply direction. Environmental groups make a sound case that more jobs can be created by developing clean, safe and affordable power and by promoting energy effi-

ciency. "If the Building Trades, Machinists and Steelworkers look at the difference in the number of long-term jobs from building a few nuclear power plants and from retrofitting thousands of homes with solar panels, they will see there are a lot more long-term jobs in retrofitting," argues League of Conservation Voters President Deb Callahan.

That message needs to be delivered quickly and loudly not just by environmental groups and service-sector unions with a penchant for green policies—such as the powerful Service Employees and American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees—but also by the Democratic leadership in the House and Senate. And Democrats have to start talking about where they will find at least some of the money—or the regulatory force—to get such programs off the ground. That means taking far more seriously the rhetoric of the 2000 campaign about opposing gimmicky tax cuts for the rich.

It also means that Democratic leaders will need to start listening to members who have spent time figuring out how energy programs can be good for labor and the environment. They could start with Ohio Rep. Dennis Kucinich, who earned national fame in the '70s when, as the mayor of Cleveland, he fought to defend that city's municipal power system. Now the chairman of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, Kucinich has developed visionary proposals for meeting the nation's energy needs while respecting the environment and creating jobs. One such plan, the Gas Price Spike Act, features ambitious proposals for providing tax credits to consumers who purchase highly efficient union-made cars, SUVs and light trucks. It also seeks to promote mass transit by providing funding for the reduction of fares.

Where would Congress find the money to pay for these ambitious initiatives? Kucinich would start with a windfall profit tax on industries that manage gasoline, diesel, crude oil and home heating oil. As another Progressive Caucus stalwart, Vermont independent Rep. Bernie Sanders, points out, "If you go out and listen to people, you'll hear plenty of anger at the energy companies. There is a great deal of support out there for windfall profits taxes."

Most Americans also oppose the Bush camp's approach. The latest Gallup poll shows 56 percent oppose opening Alaska's wildlife refuges for oil drilling, while just 40 percent back Bush's position. On the broader question of how to respond to current energy shortages, 52 percent favor conservation while 36 percent lean toward the Bush plan to increase production.

The strategy for countering Bush, Cheney and Rove must speak the language of both blue-collar workers and environmentalists. To do so, however, progressives on both ends of the Teamsters-and-Turtles coalition must force Democrats to challenge not merely Bush's cynical environmental vision but Karl Rove's even more cynical political schemes. "The Bush people know that Republicans have a lot better chance of winning when they can drive that wedge in between labor and the environmental movement," LaFollette says. "They know that if they can sell the idea that Bush is for jobs and the Democrats are not, he'll have a better chance to cut into the union vote that went so strongly against him. That's their priority. The point is to counter Bush and his people with a message that jobs and environmental protection go together. And we can't be cautious in what we propose. You know Bush's people won't be." ■

If anything was clear about the will of the American people in the last presidential election, it was their concern for education. In poll after poll, Americans said they wanted their new president to address the issue. Be careful what you wish for, America. It looks like you're going to get it.

George W. Bush differs in some important ways from his recent Republican predecessors, who recommended abolishing the federal Department of Education altogether. Bush has proposed an increase in federal education spending—one of the largest percentage increases of any of his cabinet-level departments. He has thrown a spotlight on the importance of early literacy and reading. He has brought needed attention to the gap in standardized test scores between black and Latino versus white students.

But the devil is always in the details, and critics of Bush's proposed education plan say his agenda threatens to obliterate any good instruction in the nation's most challenged public schools; to push thousands of low-performing students out of school altogether; to scare off the most creative educators during a teacher shortage; to divert funds meant for poor students or English-language learners; and to take several small but sure steps toward privatizing public education. Critics say his plan is based on politics not pedagogy, and is guaranteed to drive a wedge even further between the education of white students and their black and Latino counterparts.

Bush's budget proposal increases funding for K-12 education by \$1.9 billion in 2002. That amounts to a whopping \$40 per public school kid. In terms of the percentage of federal government funds that go to education, the United States actually spends less than it did 20 years ago, thanks to inflation and steady annual reductions during the '80s. Under the Bush plan, the United States would spend a little more than two cents of every federal taxpayer dollar on education. Defense gets a quarter.

Democrats in Congress have called Bush's bluff when it comes to funding, and education bills in both the House and Senate call for greater spending than Bush has proposed. Democrats also have fought vehemently to keep private school vouchers out of any education bill. But many of the most insidious and far-reaching proposals in Bush's plan are emerging unscathed from negotiations—high-stakes testing top among them. And whatever the final education bill looks like, it's worth remembering what's on Bush's wish list. These proposals probably will appear again, likely under a

softer spotlight than the one shone on a first-term president in his first 100 days.

With the Democrats negotiating some compromises, the stage is set for a Rose Garden signing of what will surely be hailed as a bipartisan education bill. When Bush first released his education blueprint, Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) gushed about how Democrats and the president saw eye-to-eye on education. "There are some areas of difference," Kennedy said after a January meeting with Bush, "but the overwhelming areas of agreement and support are very, very powerful."

Bush's grand plan for closing the achievement gap between minorities and whites, between poor students and "their

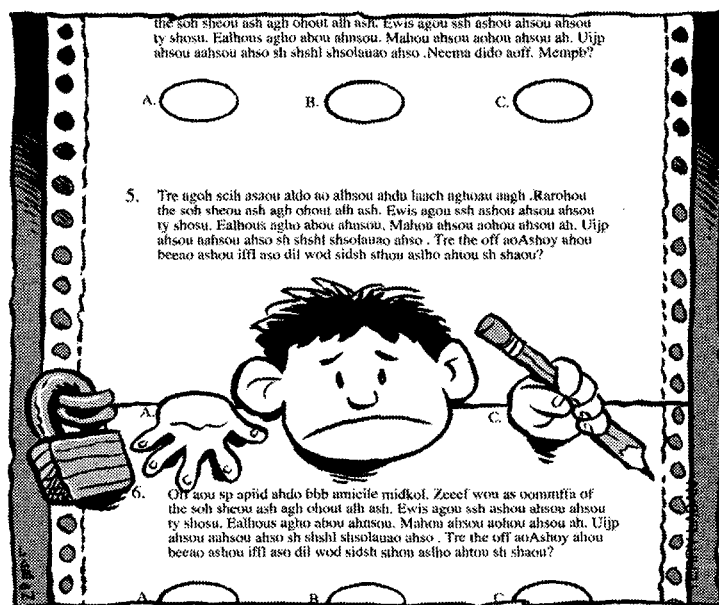
more advantaged peers," is high-stakes standardized testing. His proposal calls for annual testing in reading and math of every student in the country in grades three through eight. "Schools, districts, and states that do well will be rewarded," says *No Child Left Behind*, the blueprint for Bush's education agenda. "Failure will be sanctioned."

Determinations of success or failure will be based on one number: aggregate standardized test scores. Schools that fail to raise test scores will lose federal Title I funds, originally instituted to offset the effects of poverty on education. In a sort of reverse Robin Hood, schools that continue to do poorly will lose more money, as students are given \$1,500 tickets out in the form of vouchers. Schools that improve test scores will get bonuses.

It's clear that urban schools and minority stu-

dents take the biggest hit under Bush's plan, as schools try by any means necessary to get test scores up. Such efforts have included narrowing instruction, cheating, pushing students into special education classes, or forcing them out of school altogether. Bush's threat of lost Title I funds for schools that don't improve won't even apply to middle-class suburban school districts, which don't receive Title I funding. And Bush's promise of choice for public school students is empty for all but the rich. Bush will up the limit from \$500 to \$5,000 on tax-free Education Savings Accounts, a move that subsidizes private school tuition for those able to put away that much.

Students in schools that can't move test scores up will get \$1,500 vouchers to spend at Kaplan Inc. (which once limited itself to helping college or graduate school hopefuls prepare for admissions exams, but in the age of high-stakes testing has found a new market in the K-12 crowd) or other tutoring ser-



Testing, Testing

The miseducation of George W. Bush

By Linda Lutton

vices. The \$1,500 vouchers are more in some cases than what the local school receives per child under Title I.

While Bush says struggling schools will be helped to improve before they lose funding or students via vouchers, the only earmarks in his 2002 budget summary are an increase of \$459 million under the Title I program "to turn around failing schools" and \$400 million to do the same for "low-performing" schools. That's about 2 percent of the federal spending on education to improve reading scores among 65 percent of all black students and 60 percent of Latinos. "These schools won't do better because they don't have any capacity to do better," predicts Monty Neill, executive director of FairTest, a group that opposes high-stakes standardized testing.

Under a compromise plan worked out in the Senate, students will also be able to use vouchers to transfer to other public schools, but only in the same district. If the feds forced states to allow inner-city students to attend schools in well-endowed suburbs, some basic funding inequities might begin to be addressed. But Bush hasn't dealt with issues that should trouble even supporters of vouchers—whether they're going to pay private school tuition, a tutor or transportation to another public school—such as the effect they'll have on students left behind in "failing" public schools.

The effect of Bush's testing plan will be nothing less than a total routing of curriculum and instruction in schools across the country, and schools serving poor and minority students will be under pressure to boost scores fast. "Teachers teach to the test in an effort to get the scores up to avoid the bad consequences," says Neill, who adds that the tests used tend to measure lower-level skills and rote memorization and undermine teachers' efforts to make sure that kids really understand concepts and can apply knowledge in different contexts. "This kind of narrow teaching to the test dumbs down curriculum where it's good, and certainly doesn't improve it where it's not good."

Indeed, just as Bush proposes his testing jihad on K-12 education, the number of colleges and universities choosing to make standardized admissions exams optional has grown to more than 380 nationwide. In February, the president of the University of California system proposed eliminating SAT scores as a requirement for admission, saying that an overemphasis on admissions exams had led to the "educational equivalent of a nuclear arms race."

At the K-12 level, the race is on and promises to heat up, thanks to Bush. Last year states spent \$400 million on designing, administering and scoring standardized tests. Bush's proposed budget would pay \$320 million in federal funds to help states design and implement tests. Just 14 states—nearly all of them in the South or Southwest, many with the worst education records in the nation—currently test students every year in reading and math from third through eighth grade. The price students pay with lost time for meaningful instruction—because they are taking practice tests or actual tests or being

drilled excessively on a small number of concepts that appear on the test—is probably the most damaging.

Neill says that in high-stakes testing states like Texas, "You can go in a school and the reading is all short passages, the length of what appears on the test, followed by multiple-choice questions. The worst is when kids are literally taught, 'Don't even read the passage: Go to the questions and look at the answer options, and then go back for what looks like the correct thing.' As test coaching for something like the SAT, this actually makes sense. But to teach someone to read this way is crazy."

In other parts of the country, teachers spend inordinate amounts of time teaching students what similes and metaphors are, or how to infer things from a passage—worthy if fairly trivial skills that have become staples in reading programs because they represent such a large proportion of questions on standardized tests. There have been stories of cheating by students, teachers and administrators. Companies have made—and then tried to cover up—mistakes in scoring tests. Huge failure rates on high-stakes exams have topped headlines. A third of the 24 states that have implemented high-stakes graduation tests are retrenching: States have shortened tests, eliminated more difficult questions and lowered passing scores. Rarely do significant resources flow to schools to help them meet new standards. Tests have prompted civil rights complaints in Illinois, Louisiana, Nevada, North Carolina, Ohio and Texas.

Bush likes to point to Texas as proof that demanding accountability through test scores improves education. Bush touts huge test score gains on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), particularly for minority students, and boasts stable dropout rates. But Walt Haney, professor of education at Boston College, found that test score gains only show up on the TAAS; Texas' scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress have remained constant, and scores on a Texas college readiness test actually plummeted at the same time TAAS scores went up. Moreover, the number of students counted as special education students—whose scores don't factor into a school's accountability rating—nearly doubled in Texas between 1994 and 1998. The number of students taking the GED to avoid TAAS has shot up. And six of the worst 14 big-city graduation rates nationwide are in Texas.

Testing is not the only harmful provision of the Bush education plan. Immigrant students take another hit when it comes to bilingual education, for which Bush wants to freeze funding in 2002, despite surging enrollment in the Latino community. Bush proposes a three-years-and-you're-out rule for immigrant students in bilingual-ed programs. Three years is a number that people are "pulling out of their hats," says Angelo Amador, national policy analyst for the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund. "There's no data that support that number. Some kids learn English in a year; some take five."

What most concerns MALDEF, Amador says, is Bush's proposal to fund bilingual education through block grants, offering local districts "flexibility" in how they spend bilingual-ed funds, as long as they improve test scores. Bush has proposed entering into

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"charter agreements" with states, in which they would be free to spend bilingual-ed funds and Title I money—currently targeted to low-income and low-achieving students—how they see fit, as long as they meet specific goals for increased student performance on standardized tests. "If you have x amount of money, and you have to spend it on books for bilingual education or new uniforms for the football team that has been winning the state championship every year, some states might decide to go with the football uniforms," Amador says. "We want to make sure that there is accountability as to where the funding is being spent."

Amador says test scores can be manipulated too easily to provide any guarantee that money is reaching students or that students are learning. He notes that in states with high-stakes testing, low-performing Latino students have been pushed into special education classes or out of school altogether in an effort to keep their test scores from counting toward a school's aggregate scores. In states that have experimented with vouchers, 90 percent of Latino parents chose to keep their children in a "failing" public school. And he says the federal government is wrong to assume that states will do right by poor and minority students once federal regulations disappear. "States have already been found by their own courts to be in breach of their own constitutions because they have not spread education funding proportionally," Amador says.

The Center for Law and Education has been fighting a proposal similar to Bush's "flexibility" provision since it was introduced in Congress last year. Director Paul Weckstein says that trading flexibility for improved test scores, called the "Straight A's" provision, "is like saying, 'Send your child to a

hospital. We're getting rid of all standards of care, we're getting rid of all FDA standards about how drugs should be administered, but have no fear, because the hospital has promised to reduce its overall mortality rates.' That's the trade-off."

How could Bush really improve education? He could force states to provide not only equitable funding, but resource comparability, says John Jackson of the NAACP: equal student-teacher ratios, equal number of computers per child, equal percentages of certified teachers, school buildings in comparable states of repair. Bush's budget does little to address child or family poverty, despite overwhelming evidence of the negative influence of poverty on educational achievement.

The National Education Association has criticized Bush for completely eliminating \$1.2 billion in funds for school repairs and renovation. They've also protested a proposal to eliminate a class-size reduction initiative—which under Bush's plan would be turned into block grants in a flexible fund to improve teacher quality and reduce class size. The Children's Defense Fund has taken to printing a copyright mark after the key phrase in its mission statement—"leave no child behind"—ever since Bush copied it for the title of his own plan.

More than 50 years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, U.S. schools are still separate and unequal. But the solution is no longer integration—which banked on linking the destinies of poor and minority children to those of better-served white students—or the mediation of poverty. Now it's high-stakes testing, chump change tossed at one of the nation's most enduring challenges, and, of course, open markets. ■

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History from Above

By Ian Stavans

In a favorite painting by Magritte, the depiction of a pipe is underlined by a puzzling message: "Ceci n'est pas une pipe." In his new book, Sven Lindqvist, the Swedish cultural critic responsible

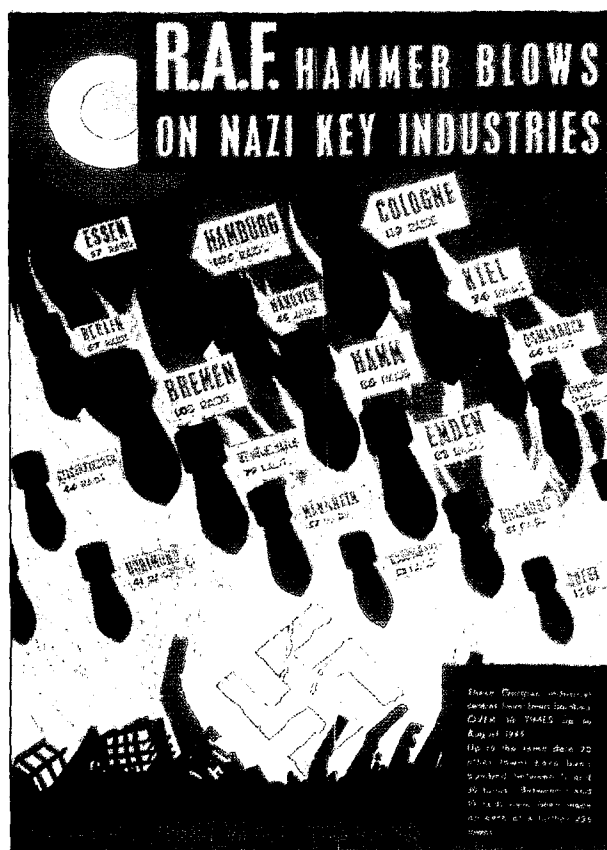
A History of Bombing
By Sven Lindqvist
The New Press
207 pages, \$24.95

for *The Skull Measurer's Mistake* and *Exterminate All the Brutes*—the latter a study of how the practices of air power in the two world wars were an application of colonial warfare—takes an equally subversive approach.

He embarks on a history of modernity by focusing on one of its most appalling inventions: the bomb. As he scrutinizes the paths of progress "by means of a collation of historical events, philosophical meditations, photographs, posters and other visuals, chemical formulas and personal anecdotes, as well as succinct endnotes and a bibliography," he seems to shriek at us with tenable conviction: Isn't this actually what progress is about?

Lindqvist is a daring, unorthodox commentator on human affairs. He takes an innovative approach to knowledge. Rather than digesting information for us, he posts it in insightful, provocative fashion, refusing any form of didacticism. He is influenced by the French *nouveau roman* (the postwar "anti-novel") and by the Latin American literary boom of the '60s. A favorite image of his is the labyrinth, which is at the core of politics and the arts in the century that just ended, from Stalinist Communism to American individualism, from Kafka's bureaucratic web to Nabokov's intellectual conundrums.

In its entirety, *A History of Bombing*, in the capable hands of translator Linda Haverty Rugg from the University of California at Berkeley, is built as a maze. Only halfheartedly does it navi-



From Guernica and London to Hiroshima and Baghdad: Explosives as "heavenly acts."

gate through the past. The feeling the reader gets is one of a disrupted, haphazard sequence. Lindqvist opens with a how-to preface: "This book," he announces, "is a labyrinth with twenty-two entrances and no exit." He goes on:

Each entrance opens into a narrative or an argument, which you then follow by going from text to text according to the instruction ➤ the number of the section where the narrative is continued. So from entrance 1 you proceed to section 166 and continue reading section by section until you come to 173, where another ➤ takes you back to entrance 2.

This device has a strange effect: It makes the volume move forward and backward with equal ease, which is, in the end, the sense one gets of progress from World War I to the bloody breakup of Yugoslavia—a progression marked by its own reflux.

Lindqvist's method recalls the obsessions of Georges Perec in *Life: A User's Manual*, in which the French avant-gardist attempted a transversal narrative study of an apartment building by recreating the lives of its tenants. But tribute is obviously paid to Julio Cortázar, an exiled Argentine in Paris, whose masterpiece, *Hopscotch* (1963), includes exactly the same type of apparatus: Its reader was asked to become "active," shaping the plot by navigating the chapters according to various strategies. (Earlier, Cortázar used the terms "male" and "female" readers as synonyms for active and passive. These backfired, expectedly.)

That *A History of Bombing* resorts to the exact same device should not be judged as unoriginal. For it fits the volume perfectly. The act—and art—of bouncing back and forth is Lindqvist's theme: restlessness, and, through it, randomness too. Furthermore, what is originality in a century marked by repetition: death as a senseless repetition? Juxtaposed are vivid geographical references that range from Guernica to North Vietnam to Oklahoma City; from London to Hiroshima to Baghdad. The protagonists, heroes and anti-heroes, are scientists, political leaders, military strategists, intellectuals and others behind the making of, and the decision to drop, explosives as "heavenly acts."

In one passage Lindqvist invokes the relationship between Albert Einstein

and FDR. In another he reflects on the award of the Nobel Prize for Physics to Marie Curie and her husband for the discovery that radioactive material was capable of releasing enormous amounts of energy, and the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. He also discusses the literary genre that includes the disturbingly neofascist *Out of the Ashes* and *The Turner Diaries*, of "the far right's golden opportunity to take power and destroy all the other races."

The enchanting pastiche of references has a cumulative effect. A *History of Bombing* is a memorable, multifarious parade of snapshots built up into a subtle encyclopedia, at once playful and defiant. Not the least bit pompous, Lindqvist, belongs to the trend among historians that has given up all pretensions of authorial omnipotence. And so, as I browsed through his pages, the feeling of getting myself lost in a chamber of mirrors took over. Sartre's dictum in *No Exit*, that "Hell is the others," springs to mind. When science and technology interact with politics, the result is devastating.

This history of the bloodiest century in memory begins in 1911, when an Italian lieutenant dropped a hand grenade on Tripoli from the cockpit of his primitive aircraft. The act had remote yet traceable roots in the past, though. In 1044, the Chinese developed a chemical equation for gunpowder; in the 12th century, they made the first technical description of a bomb "filled with thirty-odd thin slivers of porcelain, which were flung out in the explosion." Lindqvist also quotes an early reaction to bombs in 1207: "The [enemy] wretches were terrified and quite lost their senses, men and horses running away as fast as they could."

But the quest is not solely to deliver a chronology of explosives and their effects on society. Lindqvist's palpable anti-imperialist drive helps him shape the succession of entries and the fashion in which the reader is likely to respond to them. He includes this enlightening passage by Joseph Hornung in 1885:

International law exists only for the powerful. Up to now they have shown no consideration for the weak. The other peoples, who make

up three-quarters of humanity, have no recourse against injustice. ...

Among civilized states, warfare is limited to states and their armies. But the civilized states deem such considerations unnecessary in warfare against the so-called inferior nations. In those cases the entire nation must be punished.

We burn their poor villages, we cut down their fruit trees, we massacre their women and children. Is this, I ask of you, the best way to teach them to love civilization?

People don't begin wars to advance their ideological goals, but vice versa. They use the bomb in battle to pump

up their public image, to fight for natural resources, to respond to economic trouble, and to defend the "moral principles on which Western civilization is founded." Civilization, of course, is a most tinted category: to be enlightened is to define oneself as superior, and superiority is only achieved through ruination.

No, ceci n'est pas progress when a bomb flies down as redeeming proof of refinement. It is simply barbarism by another name. ■

Ilan Stavans teaches at Amherst College. His next book, On Borrowed Words: A Memoir of Language, will be published by Viking in August.

Little Mogul Lost

By S.L. Wisenberg

In his distinguished literary career, Ariel Dorfman has been lyrical, political, mystical and clever. *Blake's Therapy* is clever. It is well-constructed, mysterious, boxes inside boxes. My marginal notes included circles within circles, and this was before I consciously

Blake's Therapy
By Ariel Dorfman
Seven Stories Press
175 pages, \$21.95

realized that Dorfman's protagonist was mirroring, after a fashion, Dante's descent into hell.

That protagonist is the perfect politically correct businessman with the surname of a Romantic poet. Graham Blake is the darling of the right, left and center. He is CEO of Clean Earth, a corporation famous for doing well by doing good. Bioengineer Jessica Owen, his pragmatic ex-wife, is the brains of the outfit. Blake is the "marketing guru," selling images of his company solving worldwide crises in energy, food and health. The empire saves the rainforest by using its flora conscientiously, and produces, in 22 locations in the United States, "an array of vitamins, herbal wonders, stimulants, floral essences, Magical Foods, Enchanted Nutrients,

Oils for the Soul, Youth Pills, the Over-and-Over-Again Supplements that have enhanced our sexuality." More insidiously, the company offers Time-Stretchers, which allow people to work faster while feeling time is slowing down.

Like Dante's tale, Blake's begins when he is middle-aged and in a dark wood. Times are tough, and a hostile takeover by dirty tycoon Hank Granger threatens. The rational thing would be to close down Clean Earth's old-fashioned factory in Philadelphia and move it to Mexico. Instead, Blake shuts down his nearby high-tech facility. For sentimental reasons Blake wants to hold on to the low-tech dinosaur, which his father founded.

When times were good, he always did the right thing. Now that his business is threatened, he's having trouble reconciling doing good and keeping his corporation alive. He can't. His nights are sleepless—95 of them in a row, in fact, accompanied by roaring headaches. He becomes impotent with his lover, Natasha. If he were a religious man, or from another era, he would seek spiritual solace. But because he is our contemporary, he "hops" from psychiatrist to psychologist to homeopath.

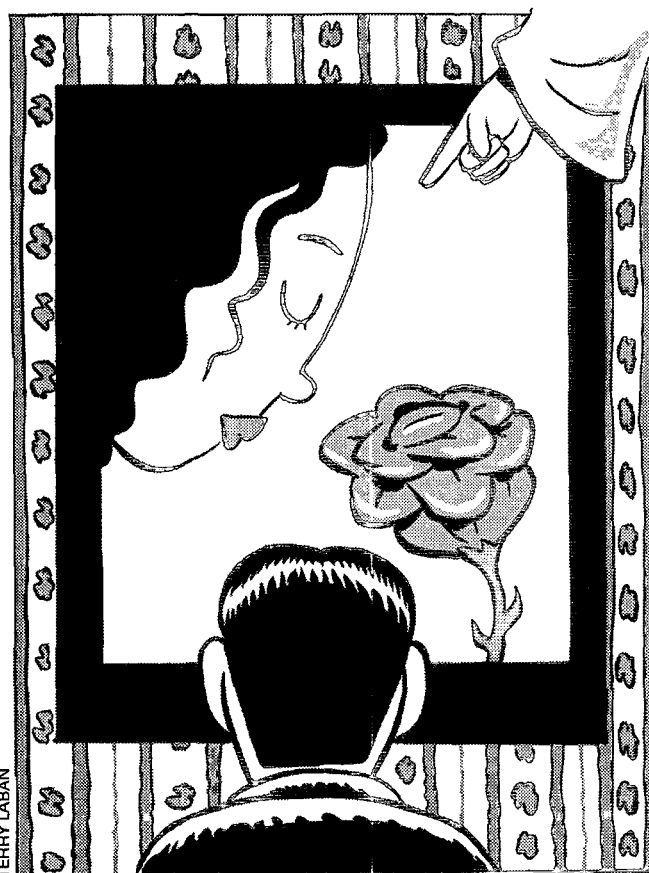
Because he is a multimillionaire, he checks himself into Dr. Carl Tolgate's Corporate Life Therapy Institute, which specializes in cleaning corporate consciences. The cost is steep: \$3 mil-

lion for 30 days of customized therapy. Business is good for Tolgate. Luckily for him, there are 4 million multimillionaires in this country and mounting pressure to “rack up profits” while appearing ethical. One of the abiding mysteries of the book is who is ultimately in charge of the clinic. Could it be Granger, who may be having an affair with Jessica?

The book begins and ends with videotape. At the novel's start, and in rather clunky exposition, Tolgate narrates a tape that shows Blake preparing for his month-long stay. The therapy consists of playing God. Blake leaves his home in Houston to become a prisoner in a comfortable apartment in Philadelphia, where he has access, via secret cameras, to the lives of a Puerto Rican family in the same building.

He has already affected their fate: His decision to close the high-tech factory put the mother and brother out of work, and caused the suicide of the daughter's good friend. The family, Tolgate says, was chosen to appeal to something that Blake fears and must work through. His treatment is “high-class interactive soap opera.” Blake can order Tolgate's employees to cause events that will wreak havoc in the lives of the family. He is the author of life and death. But no one will know he was the one calling the shots. It is the ultimate morality test. (Warning to lovers of suspense: The next four paragraphs reveal elements of the plot.)

Blake does cause mayhem—nothing permanently damaging, he keeps reassuring himself. He becomes fixated on Roxanna, the daughter of the family, “too perfect a fit for my desires,” a spiritually rich nurse in the old factory. He tests her inner strength by separating her from those she loves, and to his horror, watches one day as the ever-cheerful Roxanna gulps the pills with which she wants to end her life. Blake breaches security to break through to the other side and saves her life.



And then it is revealed that they were only actors, the pills ersatz. Thus the therapy ends—or does it?—with Blake convinced of his own goodness. In another chapter we are treated to an interrogation of a woman named Rose, a nurse in the factory, upon whom, it becomes clear, the character of Roxanna was based. Later, Blake befriends the real family of the real

No one will know he is the author of life and death—it is the ultimate morality test.

Rose, and seeks their approval. He plans to save Rose by setting her up with her own line of products in her native Colombia.

Roxanna and Rose are saint-like, spiritual healers, communers with flowers and herbs. Rose can tell instinctively how many petals a rosebud has: “You need to

let each rose open gradually, reveal itself at its own pace, take its time, petal by petal, opening to the light that showers onto it, slowly, indolently, imperceptiblemente. ... That's what we should do with a rose, with the food we cook and eat, act toward one another. But of course we don't.”

When Rose trusts Blake (or Gus Henderson, his alias when he arranges to become part of her life), she reveals to him a secret. A personal story, how her father was hounded out of her small native town because of a betrayal by a multimillionaire—Onassis, though that story also could be suspect. And Rose too may be an actress.

Who is real? Who's engineering what? Can Latin America save the North's soul? And what of Dante? Dorfman's novel is peppered with epigraphs from *The Divine Comedy*. For Roxanna and Rose, think of Beatrice, Dante's ideal woman, who leads him through paradise and

is also allegorically the Church and Grace. But the analogy is loose. Tolgate is a poor stand-in for the shade of the virtuous poet Virgil, who leads Dante through hell. And the toll for descent is steep.

Blake's Therapy offers much food for discussion and thought. The book is likeable and engrossing. But plot and cleverness override character, reducing Blake to an approval-seeker suffering from an early loss of his mother. He doesn't change from beginning to end, nor does he even seem to have the opportunity to change or search his soul. His business decisions are presented too simply. I wanted to see him weigh and rationalize various complex options. The plot nearly distracted me from realizing that there just isn't enough inside those very clever boxes within boxes. ■

S.L. Wisenberg's short story collection, *The Sweetheart Is In*, has just been published by TriQuarterly Books/Northwestern University Press. Her Web site is www.slwisenberg.com.

The Hollywood Plot

By Julien Lapointe

An esteemed film critic, Jonathan Rosenbaum is also notorious for his belligerent and polemical writing. But in his new book, *Movie Wars: How Hollywood and the Media Conspire to Limit What Films We Can See*,

Movie Wars: How Hollywood and the Media Conspire to Limit What Films We Can See
By Jonathan Rosenbaum
A Cappella
234 pages, \$24

he has reconfigured his critical barbs into a more thorough and thoughtful critique of Hollywood and mainstream movie reviewing. Though many of the chapters are expanded versions of reviews already published in the *Chicago Reader*, the weekly where he writes, Rosenbaum has loosely organized his various rants and musings in accordance with a broader thesis, and they acquire a sharper focus.

Movie Wars is concerned with how film culture in America is largely defined by major American studios: Not surprisingly, Hollywood promotes its own products. More distressingly, most mainstream film reviewers follow these economic dictates, concentrating on whichever movies are heavily publicized and widely distributed, often to the exclusion of a vast majority of independent and foreign features.

One possible problem with Rosenbaum's position is that the field of film criticism relies so heavily upon individual critics' opinions; the "conspire" in his subtitle is a strong word for simply wanting more attention directed to some obscure films that he and some of his colleagues happen to like. Moreover, when Abbas Kiarostami's Iranian films finally do find distribution, only to be dismissed by *The New Yorker's* David Denby, Rosenbaum won't stand for it.

But this book is in part an attempt to wrestle a minority film culture from the

stranglehold claim that Hollywood is just giving the "public what it wants." Public opinion, according to Rosenbaum, taking his cue from Ernest Borneman's 1947 essay "The Public Opinion Myth," is relative only to certain imposed limitations: Hollywood films are the most widely watched because they are the most readily available. If this position is open to question, it nonetheless suggests why American film culture, in the range of films shown, is solipsistic and primitive by European comparison, France being a case in point.

Rosenbaum's position is that the difficulty in appreciating supposedly esoteric art-house fare by Kiarostami, or Taiwanese director Hou Hsiao-hsien,



Is Jonathan Rosenbaum lost in the art house?

may result from their being defined in relation to our past filmgoing experiences and backgrounds. Ultimately, he's staking a claim for a more heterogeneous film culture, one in which borders between high, popular, middlebrow and avant-garde art have far less deterministic impact on our tastes.

Rosenbaum is hardly an enemy of mainstream popular cinema per se, as an eloquent defense of Joe Dante's *Small Soldiers* makes clear. Despite his argumentative edge, Rosenbaum leans toward inclusive aesthetic appreciation. Unfortunately, at other times he seems content to get entangled in partisan disputes. Though not included in

Movie Wars (it appears elsewhere in his *Movies as Politics*), Rosenbaum's attack on Tim Burton's *Ed Wood* is emblematic. His argument that the film is complicit in the alleged solipsism of postmodern culture makes for a thought-provoking read. But it is also something of a narrow polemic. The unstated premise is that *Ed Wood* is so shallow a film that at best it only reflects a uniform set of cultural and ideological tendencies. Rosenbaum is entitled to his bias—as well as his indignation when similarly reductive criticisms are directed at films he views as complex masterpieces.

There is an implicit double standard throughout Rosenbaum's work. He maintains that films ideally are best appreciated in hindsight, and we should be wary of our immediate responses. That's all fine for the underrated films Rosenbaum likes. But with current releases

that are either mainstream, or have won over mainstream critics, he tends to opt for critical backlash. It's frustrating to read his hasty dismissals of James Toback or Abel Ferrara, or even his more considered dissents against Burton.

In his writing, Rosenbaum characteristically mixes the journalistic with personal anecdote; a style he has attributed to the influence of *The Village Voice* on his early work. He has given special credit to Norman Mailer, albeit distancing himself from that author's macho tenor. Indeed, more than most male critics, Rosenbaum frequently rails against films with macho posturing and male bravado. He's even gone so far as to refer to his "psychosexual" approach to film as "feminine."

But Rosenbaum's relationship to feminism still leaves something to be desired. As far as I can tell, he has never directly addressed the institutional imbalance that privileges male over female filmmakers throughout the world. One could add that he seldom, if ever, discusses queer cinema. Rosenbaum's distinction is to discuss mainstream film criticism from his own vantage point, but he too has his own biases and omissions. ■

Julien Lapointe is a freelance writer in Montreal. He can be reached at bateau_ivre@sympatico.ca.

Labor's Close-Up

By Jane Slaughter

Bread and Roses, Ken Loach's first picture made in the United States, is set inside a fictional 1999 Justice for Janitors immigrant workers orga-

Bread and Roses
Directed by Ken Loach

nizing drive in Los Angeles. It is, like all Loach films, unabashedly pro-working class, pro-struggle, anti-boss.

For this, some critics call Loach didactic, his characters black-and-white. Anthony Lane, *The New Yorker's* reviewer, squirmed through the 12-minute meeting scene in Loach's *Land and Freedom* in which peasants in the Spanish revolution debate appropriation of the land. The *Los Angeles Times* deplored *Bread and Roses'* "one-dimensional bad guys—bureaucratic security guards and evil supervisors."

But if you've had a blue-collar job, you've probably known supervisors just like that. They may not beat their wives, so, no, Loach doesn't show us a well-rounded picture of their complex personalities. Because the picture is not about them. *Bread and Roses*—again, like other Loach films—is about and for the people who are not usually the subjects. It's about how they experience a supervisor who charges a "commission" for hiring them, feels free to insult them—"old bags, spastics"—and tells them they're lucky to have a \$5.75-an-hour job.

The film follows a new, undocumented Mexican immigrant, Maya (Pilar Padilla), who joins her older sister, Rosa (Elpidia Carrillo), cleaning high-rises in Los Angeles. For Maya, vacuuming on the night shift is preferable to fending off drunks as a barmaid. But she is moved to act when the supervisor fires a co-worker, an older woman who, he says, can't keep up. We know from the first scene, when Maya is just out of the coyote's van, that she is a person of uncommon resourcefulness. Loach is reminding us that this is a characteristic many immigrants share; they've had to be sharp, the risk-takers, or they wouldn't be here.

But the janitors are not all of one mind about how to succeed in their new



Adrien Brody on the picket line.

country. In one scene, a union organizer housecalls Maya and Rosa: "Hi, I'm Sam Shapiro from the Justice for Janitors campaign."

Like other Ken Loach pictures, *Bread and Roses* is about and for people not usually shown in the movies.

"Hello, I'm Rosa from the justice for Rosa campaign," Rosa snaps back, and orders Sam out of the house. "Don't ever say 'we,'" she rebukes him, calling him a white boy and a college kid.

Are we supposed to see Sam (Adrien Brody) simply as clever and dedicated,

which he certainly is? Or does he also embody the criticisms made of some union campaigns: that they are run top-down, with the workers following the ingenious strategies laid out by professional organizers who've never mopped a floor? Sam's favorite phrase is "Listen up!" as he tells the janitors what will happen next. At a confrontation with building owners, he and a fellow organizer make the speeches, although we have seen earlier that there are workers perfectly capable of doing so, and in English.

In a 1999 interview, Loach told me that screenwriter Paul Laverty had been in L.A. for a year, spending time with janitors and with organizers who worked on the original Justice for Janitors campaign in 1990. I believe Laverty and Loach got it all—the subtlety that yes, these workers need a union, and that no, unions (and organizers, and workers) are not perfect. There's a marvelous scene where Sam's superior in the union explodes—"Three injunctions in two days!"—and tells him to cool it. This is not the way some Justice for Janitors campaigns have worked—the union higher-ups in those battles have been quite willing to use militant tactics.

But the film is dead-on when it comes to most union conflicts. During the recently concluded Detroit newspaper strike, for example, a union staffer who suggested the union could defy a crippling injunction was threatened with firing. When the real L.A. janitors won their union in 1990—through massive civil disobedience—they did not get their own local, but instead were thrown into a 25,000-member behemoth run in the traditional bureaucratic fashion. They formed a dissident slate, won the union election—and then saw the local thrown into trusteeship by John Sweeney, then the president of the Service Employees.

By the end of *Bread and Roses*, we're left not knowing how the janitors will resolve such tensions. Sam says, "It's over," and that is the least true moment in the film. Ken Loach has respected his viewers enough to let us figure that out for ourselves. ■

Jane Slaughter is an In These Times contributing editor.

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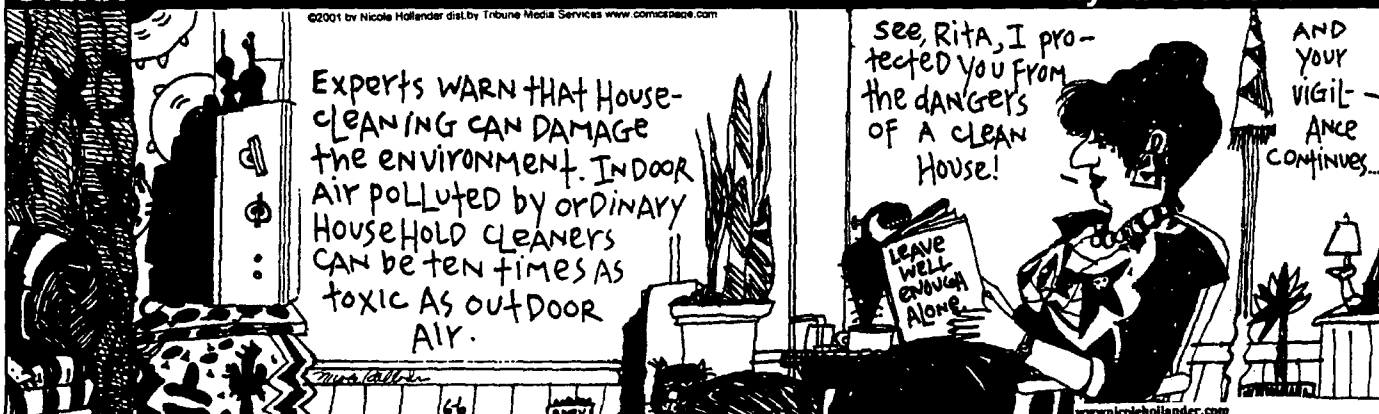
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By Nicole Hollander

Continued from page 30

massacres to take place, whether in Vietnam, Indonesia, East Timor, Guatemala or El Salvador? These are the issues that the independent media have raised for years, and we must continue to raise them. We must fight against the commercialization of the media and—no matter how many channels are out there—the concentration of ownership of the media.

We know where commercial broadcasting is, but I'm concerned about public broadcasting in general. You have Noggin, the joint project of Children's Television Workshop and Nickelodeon, a for-profit company, conducting market research on students in public schools. Last year a public elementary school was given thousands of dollars by Noggin—the school loves the money and the caché of working with people from the Children's Television Workshop. Experts came in and asked the children to fill out a 27-page booklet called "My All About Me Journal." It sounds innocent and wonderful enough, yet this can be used for marketing research.

Or, look at some of the documentaries that PBS has accepted and some of the documentaries that PBS has rejected, according to FAIR.

Rejected by PBS: *Defending Our Lives*, an Academy Award-winning documentary about domestic violence. Why rejected? One of the producers was the leader of a battered women's support group, and PBS felt that gave her a direct, vested interest in the subject matter of the program.

What was distributed by PBS? *The Prize: The Epic Quest for Oil Money and Power*, a series funded by Paine-Webber, a company with significant oil interests. The series' chief analyst was Daniel Yergin, a consultant to major oil companies. Almost every expert featured in the program was a defender of the oil industry.

Then you had a documentary *Out at Work*, a film about workplace discrimination against gays and lesbians. Why did PBS reject it? Because it was partially funded by unions and a lesbian group. PBS acknowledged that the underwriters had clearly not controlled the program's content and that it was compelling TV, responsibly done, but still refused to distribute the film.

What did they accept? *Living Against the Odds*, a special on risk assessment that asserted, "We have to stop pointing the finger at industry for every environmental hazard." That program was funded by Chevron.

At *Democracy Now!* we exposed Chevron's involvement in the killing of two Nigerian activists who had come, along with a whole village, to a Chevron barge to protest another oil spill. Chevron flew in the Nigerian military and the notorious mobile police known as the "Kill 'n Go," who opened fire and killed two of the villagers. There is now a lawsuit in court in San Francisco, which the judge has just ruled can move forward, against Chevron on behalf of the family members of those who were killed.

I am also gravely concerned that four years ago, when *Democracy Now!* started airing the

commentaries of Mumia Abu-Jamal, we were pulled off of 12 public radio stations in Pennsylvania that were run by Temple University, and we were their most successful program. They said it was "inappropriate" to air Abu-Jamal's voice. My response is that we're not entertainers, we're reporters. We bring listeners the voices of the popular and the unpopular. We go to where the silence is and we say something. It's absolutely critical during this time of privatization of prisons that while prisons are still largely public, we be the media watchdogs and help the people who are behind bars and on the controversial Death Rows of this country to speak out.

I am concerned that Pacifica, the only nationally broadcast independent media network, is taking a turn in the wrong direction. Pacifica was born more than 50 years ago in Berkeley, California, started by a man named Lou Hill who felt that there had to be a media outlet that was not run by corporations. He had come out of jail after World War II for refusing to fight. He said that since the media were run by corporations that provide the drum beat for war because war is profitable, you had to have a media outlet that is independent, run by journalists and artists. As George Gerbner, founder of the Cultural Environment Movement, put it, "corporations have nothing to tell and everything to sell." ■

Amy Goodman is the host of the Pacifica radio network's *Democracy Now!* This essay was adapted from her keynote address at the Project Censored awards ceremony, which was held in April in San Francisco.



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Something To Tell

By Amy Goodman

Democracy Now! is facing very serious pressure. I was called to Washington in September and met with the general managers of all the stations, who raised concerns about the program.

For example, they questioned my insistence on talking about the graphic details of police brutality before listeners have had their morning coffee. I replied that we should be more concerned about the police brutality that was taking place than what time our listeners heard about it.

The station managers asked why I went up to Spike Lee during the Gore-Bradley debate and asked him what he thought about the students around the country who were taking over administration buildings, protesting that their college sweatshirts were being made in sweatshops. He said he applauded their right to protest. Then I asked how he justifies being a spokesman for Nike? They weren't pleased with this. I mean, it makes sense that Spike Lee wouldn't be happy, but the general managers of the Pacifica stations?

They wanted to know why I found it necessary to go up to former President George Bush at the Republican Convention and ask him what he says to those who call him a war criminal for dropping bombs on Iraq.

Their criticism concerns me gravely, because the kinds of issues we deal with every day are police brutality, the prison-industrial complex, giving voice to the anti-sweatshop movement, showing how important it is to go up to those in power and hold them accountable.

Of course, it's not only Pacifica that has criticized me. I recently went to the news conference of former Nebraska Sen. Bob Kerrey, which he was forced to hold because the *New York Times* and CBS were coming out with a story that what he won the Bronze Star for in Vietnam was in fact a massacre of women and children in the Mekong Delta more than 30 years ago. I think he was leaking the story first to cut down on the criticism and to be able to frame it himself.

The following exchange occurred between Kerrey and me:



**"I am concerned
that Pacifica is
taking a turn in the
wrong direction."**

Me: It's not just people like you who pull the trigger and kill civilians who bear different levels of responsibility. What do you think of setting up a war crimes tribunal that would bring people, perhaps like you, but more importantly, the architects, like Henry Kissinger, before it, and then the decision would be made about whether this was a war crime or not.

Kerrey: Again, it's your—your—I just—I'm not prepared to talk about where I'm going to go or where this ought to go. I really am not. And I—I—you know, I appreciate ...

Me: Well, you've had more than 30 years to think about this.

This is a man who has run for president, and who may run for president again. I consider these standard questions to ask someone like Kerrey. The next night, the following exchange occurred on *Fox Special Report With Brit Hume*:

Hume: What about that question and what about the general behavior of our colleagues in that news conference?

Mara Liason (National Public Radio reporter): I don't think this kind of press conference would have happened if he was in Washington. ... I don't know if those people have worked for any publications. I don't know if they really were journalists. They were clearly interested in reliving the war and the anti-war movement.

The following night on the same show, *Roll Call's* Morton Kondracke weighed in: "This struck me as a little left-wing cabal. I don't know who those reporters were, especially the woman." As did his partner in punditry, the *Weekly Standard's* Fred Barnes: "This is a left-wing attack to make sure that people continue to regard ... the Vietnam War as wrong."

What I was doing was trying to depersonalize it from Kerrey and to look at the overall U.S. foreign policy issue of war crimes. War crimes tribunals are being set up in different places in the world, but what about right here in the United States, which is so often the country that provides the weapons that allow these

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